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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/AND, AND INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [OFDP](#) [VZ](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA AND VENEZUELA TO EXCHANGE NEW
AMBASSADORS

Classified By: DCM Peter M. Brennan, Reason 1.4(d).

11. (U) On June 4, the Costa Rican Cabinet approved leftist former presidential candidate Vladimir de la Cruz as the GOCR's new Ambassador-designate to Venezuela. On June 5, Alejandro Solano, MFA Deputy Director of Foreign Policy, told us that he expected De la Cruz to arrive in Caracas "in a couple of weeks." A brief bio of De la Cruz appears below.

12. (SBU) Solano added that the COGR had no problems with the new Venezuelan Ambassador-designate to Costa Rica, who had not been named publicly for protocol reasons, and that the MFA hoped to formally accept his appointment as early as June 15. The Venezuelan Ambassador-designate replaced Jose Huerta Castillo, whose appointment languished for months and was ultimately not accepted by the GOCR due to a scandal involving Huerta in Paraguay. Solano confirmed the BRV's designate to be "a representative to an international organization headquartered in the U.S."

13. (U) Begin biography of Vladimir de la Cruz:

Manuel Vladimir de la Cruz de Lemos
Costa Rican Ambassador to Venezuela

Age: 61 years
DOB: July 17, 1946

Background:

- Dean of Social Science and Professor, Universidad Nacional (leftist-leaning).
- Three-time presidential candidate of Fuerza Democratica Party (socialist) in 1998, 2002 and 2006.
- Candidate for National Assembly, 2002 and 2006.
- Advisor, National Assembly, 1998-2002.
- Political affiliations: Frente de Accion Universitaria (1967-1972); Partido Socialista (1973-1980); Fuerza Democratica (since 1996).
- Historian, academic and researcher, Universidad Nacional and Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Director of the "Work Studies Institute" (IESTRA, Spanish acronym), Universidad Nacional.

Education:

- Bachelor's in Law, graduate degree in History, Universidad de Costa Rica.

Additional:

- De la Cruz describes himself as "progressive, democrat and leftist."

Personal:

-- Married to Anabelle Picado.
-- Four children: Yalena (commentator for La Nacion newspaper), Lautaro, Presbere and Tupac Amaru.

End Bio.

14. (C) COMMENT: De la Cruz's appointment is somewhat puzzling. By background and inclination, he may be sympathetic to the BRV's outlook and initiatives. On the other hand, the Arias administration has kept its distance from Chavez, with President Arias himself publicly criticizing the Venezuelan leader on more than one occasion. So why appoint De La Cruz? We speculate that Arias may be looking to improve Costa Rican-Venezuelan relations (or at least reduce frictions) in order to position himself at some point to moderate Venezuelan tensions with the region. Arias has periodically "offered his services" in this regard in conversations with visiting USG officials. Entering the last half of his administration, the Nobel Prize winner may also be looking to play a larger role in regional and global politics, his well-known and long-time passion. Domestically, Arias has also been accused of abandoning his "socialist" roots, and appointing De la Cruz may be one way the president can burnish his leftist intellectuals, now that the bruising domestic political debate over CAFTA-DR is almost over.

In his younger days, De la Cruz was a firebrand leftist who advocated revolutionary causes, but he appears to have mellowed over time. In a June 6 interview with "La Republica" newspaper, De la Cruz said that while he still considers himself a socialist, "I've matured and (now) understand that the development of a revolution in Costa Rica can only be done through democratic means, using the mechanisms that the

Constitution provides." It remains to be seen what impact De la Cruz can and will actually have, however. When asked by a radio interviewer what he hopes to achieve during his term as Ambassador, De la Cruz replied, "I don't know."
CIANCHETTE